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There is No CAFTA Sugar Deal

WASHINGTON—Sugar farmers and processors from across the country were united today in saying that there is no sugar deal that addresses their concerns with the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

“A group of legislators tried to pursue a reasonable and comprehensive solution, but no solution was found.” said Terry Jones, a Wyoming sugarbeet farmer and president of the American Sugarbeet Growers Association. “Contrary to rumors floating around, there is no deal, and we will use all available resources to defeat CAFTA.”

Last week, sugar representatives presented a concept aimed to address sugar farmers’ concerns with CAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and future trade agreements without renegotiating the CAFTA or excluding sugar from future trade deals—two conditions that the Administration had insisted on during Congressional hearings.

“We know our Republican Congressional champions are in a difficult position, and it was out of respect to them that we’ve made this last-ditch effort,” explained John Schlechter, a board member for the Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida. “Sugar farmers are lucky to be represented by lawmakers who will work so hard on their behalf. We now ask them to continue to support us by opposing CAFTA.”

The sugar industry recently voted to redouble its efforts to defeat CAFTA and are preparing for intense Congressional outreach as CAFTA nears a vote.

“This is literally a fight for our very survival. It’s a fight for a way of life and for Louisiana’s 250-year-old sugarcane industry,” said John Gay, a Louisiana cane farmer and past president of the American Sugar Cane League. “We cannot afford to lose. We will leave no stone unturned. We must defeat CAFTA.”

Religious groups; numerous state governments; trade unions; small businesses; national farm associations; various textile interests; environmental groups; and Latin American human rights organizations are just a few of the groups that join sugar farmers in calling for the swift and sound defeat of CAFTA.

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